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COLLECTED ESSAYS

COLLECTED
ESSAYS PAPERS &c.
of
ROBERT BRIDGES

VIII
DANTE IN
ENGLISH LITERATURE

IX
THE POEMS OF
EMILY BRONTË

X
DRYDEN ON MILTON

Oxford University Press
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1932

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PREFACE

THE FIRST VOLUME of Robert Bridges' Collected Essays and Papers is completed with this number. It contains all the principal Essays which he wrote from time to time on various poets; also a Lecture on Free Verse and a paper on Poetic Diction.

Readers may be reminded of his statement at the outset that 'the general purpose of the series of pamphlets is to deal in a practical manner with the problem of our English spelling by furnishing the *desiderata*, beginning with the most evident and most easily supplied', and continuing with a 'gradual introduction of the novelties'.

His own interest in the series lay mainly in the opportunity which it offered for promoting his scheme for spelling reform. Indeed I do not think that he would at the time have undertaken the reprinting of his Prose, had not the Press acceded to his request 'that he should be allowed to spell as he liked'.

He was not able to see the work finished, but

PREFACE

he had planned ahead and had chosen experts to aid in the completion—Mr. David Abercrombie, whose advice on phonetic questions I have already acknowledged in the Preface to the last number, and Mr. Alfred Fairbank, whom I have to thank for designing one special letter.

I should like to repeat my husband's thanks to Mr. Stanley Morison and the London Monotype Corporation for their kind assistance in designing and cutting new symbols; and also to record here my gratitude to the Clarendon Press, not only for their unfailing patience with the numerous revises demanded by the new type and spelling, but also for much friendly help and advice throughout the course of the work.

M. M. Bridges

Chilswell.

1932.

ON THE PHONETIC ALPHABET

ON THE PHONETIC ALPHABET

In accordance with the promise given in the Preface to Essays VI and VII, the consonants are treated in this number. Some of the new symbols have already been used in earlier Essays.

THE CONSONANTS

The following are unchanged:

b d f h j k l m n p q r t v w x y z.

c is soft before *ε e i i ɛ γ.*

c is hard before all other vowels and diphthongs.

g is always soft, thus *gem, manag.*

g „ hard, „ *go, get.*

s has four forms:

s as in *soft* (unvoiced)

ʒ „ *was* (voiced)

ʃ „ *sugar* (unvoiced)

ʒ „ *measure* (voiced)

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ŋ as in *sing*

<i>th</i>	„	<i>thin</i>	(unvoiced)
<i>th</i>	„	<i>the</i>	(voiced)
<i>wh</i>	„	<i>what</i>	
<i>ch</i>	„	<i>chin</i>	
<i>sh</i>	„	<i>ship</i>	
<i>si = sh</i>	„	<i>Asia</i>	
<i>ci = sh</i>	„	<i>social</i>	
<i>ti = sh</i>	„	<i>notion</i>	

When *ch* or *wh*, unligatured, are used at the beginning of a word, one of the letters is mute: thus, *Christian*, where *h* is mute; *whæ*, where *w* is mute.

Note. Phonetically, 5 symbols are unnecessary for the sound *sh* (*f*), but we retain all of them in use at present to avoid the otherwise unfamiliar appearance of words.

The list of vowels (with the notes thereon, and rules for the effect of *r* and *w* on certain vowels) is here reprinted from the last number, in order that readers may have the whole alphabet before them.

COMPLETE TABLE OF THE VOWELS

accented.	unaccented.	accented or unaccented.	
			as in—
<i>a</i>			<i>father</i>
		<i>a</i>	<i>hat</i>
	<i>ɑ</i>		<i>ago, general, ɑ.¹</i>
<i>av</i>		<i>aʹ</i>	<i>avtumn, avthority, avll.</i>
<i>ε</i>			<i>bed.²</i>
		<i>u, y</i>	<i>made, dy.</i>
			(<i>abute.</i> (As a mute, denoting length of preceding vowel.) ³)
	<i>e</i>		{ <i>heven.</i> (Vocalizing a liquid.)
			{ <i>the.</i> (Before a consonant.)
<i>ɪ</i>	<i>i</i>		<i>grin, recall;⁴ the.</i> (Before a vowel.)
	<i>i</i>		<i>it.</i>
	<i>ɛ</i>		<i>might, bɛ.</i>
	<i>o</i>		<i>hot.</i>
	<i>o</i>		<i>open.</i>
	<i>u</i>		<i>full.</i>
<i>ω</i>			<i>moon.</i>
	<i>u</i>		<i>unite.</i>
	<i>v</i>		<i>but.</i>
	<i>av</i>		<i>how.</i>
	<i>γ</i>		<i>lyric, pity.</i>

NOTES TO TABLE OF VOWELS

1. The form of this symbol was chosen to picture the sound that it stands for; viz. an imperfect *a*—one whose characteristic sound is blurred through being unaccented.

To read *paradox* and *Africa*, for example, may serve to remind a deliberate, careful speaker not to say *paradox*, *Africa*.

2. Some writers may choose to use *e*, in preference to *ɪ*, for certain syllables which carry a secondary accent only; thus, the last syllable in *tenderness*, *lightheartedness*:—

and for past participles, bearing a secondary accent, as *comforted*, *distributed*:—

also for certain words with the prefix *ex*—if they pronounce *ex* rather than *ix*, although the vowel is unaccented: viz. *example*, *expire*, *exhaust*. Robert Bridges would have advocated this pronunciation and spelling; and in such words as the above, where the vowel in the second syllable is undoubtedly accented, the reader would not be misled.

3. The use of *e*, as a mute, sometimes to soften *ɪ*, but chiefly to distinguish long from short final syllables, is explained in Prose V.

Further it is permitted to write mute *e* at the end of certain monosyllables, which, by virtue of their sense, carry weight, even if their vowel be short by nature: thus *love*, and occasionally *done*, *gone*, &c.

Some is written *some* or *sm*, according to the context and consequent accent: thus on p. 203, *some of her friends*; but on p. 206, *this author had sm desperat life-secret*.

4. *ɪ* followed by *e*, as in *sincere*, *these*, is accented. *ɪw* is accented, as in *few*, *beautiful*.

For those who have not seen No. V, it should be explained that this symbol, *ɪ*, stands for *i*, and *ɪ* for *ii*, in the I.P.A. alphabet. It was the intention of the designer (R.B.) to approximate the shape to some form of *i*, which would in all probability be eventually substituted.

RULES

FOR THE EFFECT OF *r* ON PRECEDING VOWELS

RULE I

In standard English,

The vowels, *a*, *æ*, *ɛ*, *o*, *u*, *ɪ*, *ω*, and the digraph *au* (except in *cowry*) are followed by the sound of *e*, before *r*. In some words this sound is represented in the spelling by the symbol *e* written before the *r* as in *aerate*, or after the *r* as in *flare*, *fire*, *more*, *pure*, but often its presence is indicated by no symbol, as in *Mary*, *stirr*, *poor*.

RULE 2

In an orthographically closed syllable ending in *r*, or *r* followed by another consonant—

or has the sound of *aur* (*ar*) *nor*, *fort*.

vr „ „ *err* *for*, *hort*.

ir „ „ *err* *stir*, *squirt*.

er „ „ *err* *her*, *herd*, *confer*.¹

ar „ „ *ar* *artistic*.²

Inflected and derived forms remain unaltered: thus, *stirrin*, *forry*.

¹ R. B. would have written *conferr* to show the accent on *er* (see V, p. ix), but as this *e* is now used in accented places only, it is needless to double the *r*: *er* is always accented, whereas *er* is always unaccented: therefore we write *ther* and *wer*, or *ther* and *wer*, according to the sentence-stress.

Also we should spell *general*, though this is not strictly in accordance with R. B.'s intention (see V, p. x).

² *ar* is used in such unaccented syllables, because *a* is reserved for accented syllables.

RULE

FOR THE EFFECT OF *w*, *wh*, and *qu* ON THE
FOLLOWING *a*.

In standard English,

a following *w*, *wh*, and *qu* has the sound of *o*:
thus—*was*, *what*, *quarrel*.

[Except before *ck*, *g*, *ng*, and *x*; as *whack*, *wag*,
wangle, *wax*.]

Note. We write *bæk*, *læk*, &c., in order to change as little as possible the appearance of these common words. And, for the same reason, *trúth*, *frúit*, &c. instead of *træth*, *fræt*: this cannot mislead as *y* (cons.) never occurs after *r* before *æ*.

Several mute consonants are retained, thus: *tuw*, *answer*; *know*, *knife*; *half*, *thawht*. Also *of* is always written thus, and not *ov*. But these are matters for personal choice.

Capitals are not dealt with. Proper names are unchanged and quotations given in the original spelling.

I have not lengthened this summary of the phonetic alphabet by reprinting Robert Bridges' explanations of the new symbols, but readers will find them in the Prefaces to the earlier essays: and it may interest them to know that, though this number and the last one (Essays VI and VII) lacked the benefit of his supervision, yet he had designed, or approved the design of all the symbols, except *a* for which I am responsible.

His views on the reform of pronunciation and the need for new symbols are set out at greater length in his *Tract on the Present State of English Pronunciation*, Oxford University Press, 1913.

M. M. B.

VIII

DANTE IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

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VIII

DANTE

IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

ANY educated Englishman, if an Italian were to ask him what influence Dante had had on the poets of our country, would probably reply that Chaucer was well acquainted with the *Commedia*, but that in the general decay of poetry after his time it fell out of sight, and except to such consummate scholars as Milton and Gray it was unknown, or known only by name, in England until the end of the 18th century, when Cary's translation introduced it to the reading public; that our two poetic exiles, Byron and Shelley, then established its reputation, which has grown steadily from favour to fashion up to the present day, when there is almost a cult of Dante. Translations are multiplied, with maps of Hell and of Italy, itineraries, grammatical tables, concordances, and excerpts of every kind, by aid of which hundreds of young ladies are at this moment stocking their brains with the details of Ptolemaic astronomy, of medieval divinity, and of the political squabbles of Guelphs and Ghibellines.

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Mr. Toynbee's book ¹ is an offspring of this cult; it professes to gather together every mention of Dante in English literature up to the year 1844; and in looking thru' it, to check our previously untutor'd impression, which we have given above, we find little to correct. There are a few names to add to Milton and Gray, but they are of scarcely more than personal interest; the main omission in our summary is the influence of Baretta, a literary Italian who came to London about 1750. The extracts from his English writings, and the place where they enter, seem to show that it was he who set the ball rolling. Secondly, we discover that Cary's translation, which was published in 1814, must have had a quicker and more decisive influence than we had attributed to it.

Thirdly, and this comes out very clearly, the recognition of Dante was immediately due to two passages of the *Commedia*—the Francesca and Ugolino episodes; these won universal admiration while the other parts of his poem were still condemn'd or despis'd; and critics were slow to see that the art which is so transcendent in those narrations is present thru'out the whole work, however unsympathetic or revolting the material that is handled.

¹ Dante in English Literature from Chaucer to Cary. By Paget Toynbee. (Methuen, 21s. net.)

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The warm admiration that Cary's version, in spite of its awkwardness, won from the best judges is very surprising. Coleridge, Moore, Southey, Landor, Rogers, and Wordsworth are all quoted; but nothing is more surprising than Coleridge's praise of it. He speaks of its 'learned simplicity . . . and the peculiar character of the Blank Verse . . . the most varied and harmonious to my ear of any since Milton'. Here is a specimen of it, an unfavourable won, no doubt, but it is not exceptional and fairly exhibits Cary's poetic style—exactly contemporary, be it noted, with Shelley's *Alastor*:—

From high descends the virtue, by whose aid
I to thy sight and hearing him have led.
Now may our coming please thee. In the search
Of liberty he journeys: that how dear,
They know, who for her sake have life refus'd.

Cud enythin be more like broken crockery? Nor where
beauty is easily within his grasp does he seize it. The
lively *terzina* at the end of the second canto—

Quale i fioretti, dal notturno cielo
Chinati e chiusi, poi che'l sol gl'imbianca,
Si drizzan, tutti aperti, in loro stelo;

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—of which he gives Chaucer's rendering in a note—

But right as flourës thorough the cold of night
Y-closëd, stouping on hir stalkës lowe,
Redressen hem ayein the sonnë bright,

he renders thus:—

As florets, by the frosty air of night
Bent down and clos'd, when day has blanch'd their
leaves,
Rise all unfolded on their spiry stems;

What clumsiness and what a number of faults are here! To take a few of them, we observe first that the indispensable miracle-working sun has disappeared: then 'leaves', which he has not the excuse of rhyme for inserting, introduces an awkward and meaningless distinction: 'florets' is a wrong translation, and 'spiry' is Castalian rubbish: but what is this 'blanch'd'? The poor little flowers first frozen and then blanch'd! He is translating *imbianca*, and, as with his 'florets', preferring literalism to sense. The word in the original is unfortunate and ill-chosen, for immediately following after the frost (*prata canis albicant pruinis*), it must suggest withering, and it is actually us'd in that sense by Dante elsewhere

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(Par. xii. 29). The translator's duty was to avoid this accidental malentendu, not to emphasize it; and how beautifully had Chaucer shown him the way!

But this leads us off to ask why Dante used this word here. One thing is, of course, certain, and that is that it could not have come of his spontaneous thinking. When we meet with such a fault in an artist who, like Milton, Dante, or Virgil, has a natural genius for right expression, and the cultivated habit of observing it, we may be sure that something external has interfered to distract him. The actual cause it may be impossible to trace, but since it most commonly is the suggestion of a previous writer, and the intrusion of a foreign phrase, it is often traceable. So here, remembering that Dante was making the language, and that *alba* was already the Italian word for dawn, we may guess that he had been attracted by the opening sentence of the VIIth book of Apuleius's 'Metamorphosis' (*Ut primum tenebris abjectis dies inalebat*), where the very rare Latin word *in-albere* is used of the dawn, and that he had determined to use *imbiancare* with the same sense in his Italian; and, if so, the preoccupation might have distracted him, and led him to introduce the word without observing its unsuitability in this particular place. However this may be, some such

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explanation is requir'd; and it is a strange confirmation of our guess—overpoweringly strong, indeed, if the unlikeli- hood of coincidence bore any logical weight—that the word had apparently exercis'd the same sort of attraction on Apuleius; for the passag quoted from him above is taken directly from Ennius (who wrote in albabat): and we have stumbled on a link that connects, however fancifully, the two great fathers of the Latin and Italian literatures.

Should the reader chance to be interested in the history of English terza rima, he may find abundant facts and clues in this book. It is strange that neither Byron nor Shelley understood the metre. Mr. Toynbee incidentally observes this, and it may be seen in The Prophecy of Dante and The Triumph of Life. The terza rima of Dante is a three-line stanza, the first and third lines rhyming together, the mid-line being unrhym'd. It is true that the unrhym'd line is taken up in the following stanza, but the close of the stanza purposely leaves it unsatisfis'd. Byron and Shelley, and most English poets after them, have consider'd merely the equally interlaced rhymes; and when terza rima is written on this continuous scheme it loses its native crispness and vigour, which depend on the stanza-stop, for thatt differentiates the

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*lines, giving to each of them special and definite relations with the others, whereas neglect of the stanza dissipates these relations, and makes the opposite effect of laxity and diffusion. Shelley neglected the stanza even when translating Dante. Our poets in fact compos'd their terza rima continuously, as they should have printed it, and printed it in stanza, as they should have compos'd it. And this makes the flippancy of Byron's letter to Murray (March 20, 1820) more amusing than he intended, when he wrote, 'Enclosed you will find in terza rima, of which your British blackguard as yet understands nothing, Fanny of Rimini': for the insult on his courtly publisher and generous public must be returned upon himself. Dixon in his *Mano* made a profession of observing the stanza, but in the use of the liberties which are necessary for variety, and desirable for special effects, he rather passes into the wrong way of writing than enforces the rule by his exceptions. He did, nevertheless, a great deal very well, and it was, no doubt, this greater strictness that won Swinburne's admiration. In a letter—part of which has already been published—he wrote to Dixon thus:—*

'You have put more life and spirit into the form

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of verse, given it more straightforwardness and ease than any other poet who has tried it in English; and as I have just been re-reading Dante it is perhaps a greater tribute to your triumphant success than it would otherwise have been to say how greatly I am struck by the wonderful power and force with which you have adapted his metre to original narrative in a language different from his.'

Has Dante's attainment in poetry has actually influenced English attainment is a difficult question; and Mr. Toynbee does not approach it, tho' his book gathers much matter indispensable to such an inquiry. His method is to give a short epitome of the life of every English writer who has mention'd Dante, together with all the passages in which the mention occurs; and this involves many tedious pages, and some which we venture to think useless. There is, for instance, a life of Ben Jonson, who knew nothing about Dante, and only mentions him once in all his works. It seems that the only excuse for inserting Jonson's life would be an equally good reason for inserting the lives of all the writers who did not mention Dante at all, but might have been expected to do so. This does not lessen our gratitude for

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the author's conscientious and well-order'd labors. Still, the more interesting side of the subject would be to analyse the influence of Dante. The mere exhibition of parallel passages is of little value; what interest there is in them lies, indeed, less in their similarities, for which they are quoted, than in their differences, which usually repay investigation. For instance the *terzina* quoted from Dante above was copy'd by Boccaccio, who altered it thus:—

Come fioretto dal notturno gelo
Chinato e chiuso, poi che il sol l'imbianca,
S'apre e si leva dritto sopra il stelo

from which, among other things, it would seem that he objected to the many flowers having only won stalk, but not to imbianca; and it is very interesting that Chaucer—if, as authorities assure us, he was following Boccaccio and not Dante—instinctively restored the flowers to the plural while he avoided imbianca.

The best method of inquiry would perhaps be such as we would use in music; that is, first to determine what qualities and effects an original genius had introduced; and then observe how the later men had climb'd on his shoulders. But even in such a question as what Milton

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ow'd tu Dante the difficultieſ are insuperable, and the difference of their material obscureſ the iſſue. In ſuch a formal matter aſ verſification who can ſay that it waſ not Dante's rhyme that determin'd Milton tu iſchew rhyme, while the example of hiſ proſody led him tu copy hiſ riſonſ and bold rythmſ aſ far aſ he dur'd? In the greit matter of artistic ſtile and handlin, in which Dante iſ ſo ſupreme, it iſ difficult tu diſtinguiſh Milton's debt tu him from hiſ debt tu Virgil. It iſ impoſſible tu doubt that Milton profit'd immensely from hiſ ſtudy of Dante, and that aſl the beſt Engliſh poets, ſettin, aſide their direct contact with Dante, hav been influenced b, him thru' Milton. Had Keats liv'd, he wud probably hav naturaliz'd ſomthin, that Milton miſt. The link between theſe remarks and the book in hand iſ the criticiſm of Dante that iſ given vnder the nameſ of Coleridge, Hazlitt, Macaulay, Carlyle, and vtherſ. The dicta are both amuſin, and inſtructiv, and make wvn regret that the date 1844 puts an end tu them. Ruſkin iſ for thiſ reaſon repr'eſented b, wvn letter written tu Rogers in 1842.

IX

THE POEMS
OF EMILY BRONTË

FIRST PRINTED

Times Literary Supplement

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IX

THE POEMS OF EMILY BRONTË

THO' the editor does not explicitly assure us that no poems are still withheld, we are led to believe that this volume¹ represents the final ransacking of Emily Brontë's notebooks, and that we have at last a complete edition of her poems. It is made up of four sections. The first two are the selections printed by Charlotte respectively in 1846 and 1850. The third is a reprint of the 67 poems privately issued by Dodd (New York) in 1902; and the fourth is a gathering of 71 poems now printed for the first time. With the 21 and 18 of Charlotte's two sections, the total is 177. It is stated in the introductory essay that Charlotte's two gatherings correspond with a MS. book of Emily's, from which only four poems were omitted. This suggests that Emily herself was responsible for the selection by which her poetry has hitherto been known. It would be interesting to identify the four poems which Charlotte rejected, but we are not informed on this point. The lover

¹ *The Complete Works of Emily Brontë*. Edited by Clement Shorter. With Introductory Essay by W. Robertson Nicholl. In Two Volumes. Vol. I: Poetry. (Hodder and Stoughton. 6s. net.)

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of poetry is abundantly grateful for the treasures now presented to him, and the critic has full material for an estimate of Emily's poetical powers. We shud, however, first answer two questions which the impatient reader wil at wonce ask—first, Was the exclusivness of Charlotte's second selection justifi'd? The answer is No. Secondly, Is the forth and last instalment what it logically shud be—thatt is, merely dregs? The answer agein is No: it contains sum of the best poems. We shall assume the reader to be fully acquainted with the first two sections of the book, which hav been long known, and we wil giv him sum account of the new poems. But it wil be well to begin with a few general remarks.

The transcendent genius of Emily Brontë is now well recogniz'd; *Wuthering Heights* has taken its place among the unrick creations of literatur. But what of the poetess? Ther is no question of her poetic faculties. The wide intellectual grasp, the unsurpass'd power of vivid representation, the almost isolated originality, the concentratd fire of nativ pasion are all undisputed; and yet, with wvn or two exceptions, her poems—which are her most personal revelation—hav made no impresion at all. The editor of this collection almost apologizes for them. 'No one to-day', he says, 'will deny them a

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certain bibliographical interest'; while Sir W. Robertson Nicoll in his introductory essay writes, 'It is not claimed for a moment that the intrinsic merits of the verses are of a special kind.' Emily herself wrote:—

Dreams have encircled me.

.

But now, when I had hoped to sing,
My fingers strike a tuneless string;
And still the burden of the strain—
I strive no more, 'tis all in vain.

And the casual reader of this book will, likely enough, look into a few pages and then close it with indifference or disappointment. What is the impediment? Why, when such a genius brought her supreme gifts to bear on the task, and loved it, why did she produce something which is at first sight cold and worthless? We do not forget that Matthew Arnold said of some of her poems that it 'shook my soul', nor that she herself never wrote anything so unlike poetry as the poem in which he praised her; and we know that stanzas chosen from her poems might exhibit her as a poet of the first order—still, the general effect is what it is, and the reasons may be perceived and stated.

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First of all, Emily Brontë is very direct, and eschews ornament. Indeed, it seems probable that what artistic defect her instinct had was indifference to artistic beauty, and that therefore the beauty in her work is that which comes of bare truth and insight rather than of æsthetic handling and ornament. Secondly, she never master'd the technique of poetry, and took what she had chiefly from poets like Cowper. Her biographers, it is true, assert that she was musical; but proficiency in her day, and at a girls' boarding school, implies little; and it would be difficult to find in her writings any evidence of the true musical faculty. In her poems she is certainly not delicately conscious of the music either of her rhythm or of her rhyme; she is rather indifferent, for she will consent to break the rhythm at any obstacle, without respect to its effect; and in her treatment of rhyme she is sometimes quite childish; where the rhymes are not common they are of'n awkward or bad, and are allowed to nullify themselves by unconsider'd assonances. It is pitiful to see her working with 'anguish' and 'languish' and such-like commonplaces, not knowing how tarnish'd the ornaments are, or else revolting from them to do something worse. And for this reason many of her poems would show to greater advantage in a translation. Incompetence in technique is a red-dy sorcery

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of obscurity or awkwardness of grammar; and indifference
to æsthetic beauty allows the diction to fall; nor is Emily
incapable of stumbling into the mannerisms of the school
with which she was most familiar. The reader may re-
member the poem beginning—

On a sunny brae alone I lay
One summer afternoon:
It was the marriage-time of May
With her young lover June.

and how after the characteristic lines—

But her father smiled on the fairest child
He ever held in his arms.

She continues—

In sooth, I did not know
Why I had brought a clouded eye -
To greet the general glow.

And in the following quotation she has a profound thought,
poetically illuminated by a masterly image, is damaged by
prosaic diction, while the grammar leaves the application
of the image ambiguous; for 'all' and 'each one' may suggest
persons, not the thoughts as intended:—

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And yet there is—or seems at least to be—

A general scheme of thought that colours all;
So though each one be different, all agree

In the same melancholy shade-like pall;
Even as the shadows look the same to me,

Though cast, I know, from many a varying wall
In this vast city—hut and temple sharing
In the same light, and the same darkness wearing.

Emily has not, therefore, a perfected style. We must not expect either full artistic technique or sustain'd height of diction; she works without them: and this pleases me; for it is a genius that is speaking, and in her speech the common words have regain'd their essential and primal significance, and, being the simplest, are therefore for her the best means of direct verbal touch with felt realities. As a French critic, whose book on the Brontës is just published—M. Dimnet—says of the poems with true perspicacity:—‘Avec des mots simples, Emily atteint à chaque instant l’effet rare . . . cette fille extraordinaire a gardé la puissance de regarder face à face la réalité près de laquelle nous passons sans la voir.’ It is just because we are so familiariz’d by language with ideas that the simple presentation of reality in that language does not

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stir our emotion, nor carry us beyond the mere recognition of the accustom'd idiom. And thus Arthur Symonds wrote of her, using the same word 'rare', 'A rare and strong beauty comes into the bare outlines, quickening them with splendour'. Indeed, a near acquaintance with her poems—which with few exceptions are the plainest revelation that she can make of herself—brings you to give the same value to her commonest expressions that you give to the most consummate artistic diction. Never was there a poet who so much requires to be kept apart from others, away from conventional contagion; and when you have got accustom'd to her voice it is wonderful what a range it covers, and how various are her successes.

We will give a few examples of the new poems; here is a madrigal which invites its music:—

*Fall, leaves, fall! die, flowers, away!
 Lengthen night! and shorten day!
 Every leaf speaks bliss to me,
 Fluttering from the autumn tree.
 I shall smile when wreaths of snow
 Blossom where the rose should grow;
 I shall sing when night's decay
 Ushers in a drearier day.*

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Here is a short lyric:—

If grief for grief can touch thee,
If answering woe for woe,
If any ruth can melt thee,
Come to me now!

I cannot be more lonely,
More drear I cannot be:
My worn heart throbs so wildly
'Twill break for thee.

And when the world despises,
When heav'n repels my prayer,
Will not mine angel comfort?
Mine idol hear?

Yes, by the tears I've pour'd
By all my hours of pain,
O I shall surely win thee,
Beloved, again.

There are a good many poems similar to these two, and there are some romantic pieces, which have to do with the land of Gondal and its mythical heroes. These are full of fire and blood, and not always intelligible, reminding

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won of William Blake and his queer imaginings. Won extract wil giv an idea of them: it is very fine of its kind:

*Percy, my love is so true and deep,
That tho' kingdoms should wail and worlds should
weep,*

*I'd fling the brand in the hissing sea,
The brand that must burn unquenchably.*

*Your rose is mine; when the sweet leaves fade,
They must be the chaplet to wreath my head,
The blossoms to deck my home with the dead.*

*I repent not—that which my hand has done
Is as fixed as the orb of the burning sun;
But I swear by Heaven and the mighty sea
That wherever I wander, my heart is with thee.*

Her ethics are sometimes like Blake:—

*And what shall change that angel-brow,
And quench that spirit's glorious glow?
Relentless laws that disallow
True virtue and true joy below.*

*There are a good many which have the terrifying passion of
Wuthering Heights. The most powerful is the poem
on the death of Branwell, 'Shed no tears o'er that tomb';
and 'Strong I stand' is of the same calibre.*

THE POEMS OF EMILY BRONTË

BUT we are compell'd to shorten our poetical extracts in order to describe the peculiar 'bibliographical interest' of this volum. The possessor of it may be congratulated on having a book which it will be hard to rival for misprints and wrong readings; they are incredible.¹

* * * * *

That any man should have kept Emily Brontë's poems in his desk for years, and should then apologize for publishing them, and not take the trouble to print them correctly, is a piece of magnificent insouciance. The pity of it is that some of the blunders are likely to remain.

¹ Here follows a list of misprints. [Ed.]

X

DRYDEN ON MILTON

FIRST PRINTED
as 'The Causerie of the Week'
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The Footnotes and Postscript &c.
were added later.

X

DRYDEN ON MILTON

WHAT did John Dryden mean when, after reading *Paradise Lost*, he wrote under Milton's portrait the well-known verses?

Three poets in three distant ages born,
Greece, Italy, and England, did adorn.
The first in loftiness of thought surpass'd;
The next in majesty; in both the last.
The force of nature could no further go;
To make a third, she joined the former two.

Not very good lines; and the contain'd thought is an artificiality warm'd up by extravagance; such a common trick that it is a desperate explanation to suspect Dryden of having been enthusiastic over his epigram rather than for the subject of it.¹ And yet in his sober prose he gives the very opposite judgment:

'Let Homer and Virgil (he says) contend for the

¹ Mark Pattison, in his life of Milton, calls this 'Dryden's pinchbeck epigram'.

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prize of honour betwixt themselves, I am satisfied they will never have a third concurrent'.¹

Which of these two opinions wud he stand by? He is more faithful to the second. He says in another place:

'We must be children before we grow to be men. There was an Ennius, and in a process of time a Lucilius and a Lucretius, before Virgil and Horace; even after Chaucer there was a Spenser, a Harrington, a Fairfax, before WALLER and DENHAM were in being, and our numbers were in their nonage till these last appeared.'

It may be some chronological explanation of this quirk compendium that Waller and Denham's flights antedated Paradise Lost, but, to say nothing of Milton's early poetry, what an account is this for a poet to give of English poetry thirty-two years after the publication of the great masterpiece, of which he had seen the force of nature could no further go, &c.! Again, there is this,

'Neither will I justify Milton for his blank verse, though I may excuse him by the example of Hannibal Caro and other Italians who have used it: for whatever causes he alleges for the abolishing of rhyme, his

¹ He did not know of Dante?

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own particular reason is plainly this, that rhyme was not his talent.'

With what a bolstering of blunders wil he now 'shove away the worthy bidden guest', and a'll tu make room for Waller and Denham; when at another tyme Homer and Virgil must be conglomeratid tu match him! Perceive how much more, therefore, as Euclid wud put it, is WD greiter than HV. Nor can thatt old inflated panegyric per contra cawnt for much, when he cooks the same dish for the Earl of Roscommon; using the identical rhyme and artifice; pray excuse them, and also the awkward metaphor which intrudes with the rhyme tu Rome:

*The French pursued their steps; and Britain, last,
In manly sweetness all the rest surpass'd.
The wit of Greece, the gravity of Rome,
Appear exalted in the British loom:
The Muse's empire is restored again,
In Charles his reign, and by Roscommon's pen. &c.*

All these quotations exhibit what Professor Saintsbury calls 'the singular justice which always marked Dryden's praise as well as his blame'.¹ But my chief

¹ English Men of Letters, edited by John Morley. Dryden, by G. Saintsbury, 1881, p. 11.

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puzzle about Dryden has been to understand how, when he substituted 'epigram' and wit in poetry for romance and imagination, he did not see how monstrously DULL he was. He sinks to dolours of metre, dolours of rhythm, dolours of rhyme (of which he was most proud), dolours of matter; a dolour gross as his ruinous self-conceit; nor is it a point of disputable or changing taste and fashion, as some critics would believe; it is bravely demonstrable.

Dryden, for instance, consider'd Chaucer a child in versification, and wasted many hours of his life in putting him into 'numbers'; see now what his wit could do. From The Knight's Tale read this intelligent improvement by Dryden:

*And left the pillagers, to rapine bred,
Without control to strip and spoil the dead.*

*There, in a heap of slain, among the rest
Two youthful knights they found beneath a load
oppress'd
Of slaughter'd foes, whom first to death they sent,
The trophies of their strength, a bloody monument.*

*Both fair, and both of royal blood they seem'd,
Whom kinsmen to the crown the heralds deem'd;*

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*That day in equal arms they fought for fame;
 Their swords, their shields, their surcoats were the same.
 Close by each other laid, they press'd the ground,
 Their manly bosoms pierced with many a grisly
 wound.*

*This really is childishly inexpert, besides being poetically
 unridable. See how fresh and masterly is Chaucer:*

*To ransake in the taas of bodyes dede,
 Hem for to strepe of harneys and of wede,
 The pilours diden bisynesse and cure
 After the bataille and disconfiture.
 And so bifel that in the taas they founde,
 Thurgh-girt with many a grevous, bloody wounde,
 Two yongë knyghtës, liggyng by and by,
 Bothe in oon armës, wroght ful richely, &c.*

*How cud Dryden imagin that he was improv'ing Chaucer
 when he was stuffin in all that stodgy padding? Nor
 does he keep his grammar right, for it wud make the
 pillagers kill Palamon and Arcite; nor cud these hav
 been lyin beneath the Alexandrine monument of their
 victims, unless they had crawl'd in afterwards, like
 Trinculo under Caliban's cloke. It is worth notin, too,
 how the description of the knights' armor gets misplaced*

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away from their identification, apparently for the sake of a useful rhyme-line. Dryden has also translated the Nun's Priest's Tale. There are in Chaucer's original three passages which always fly to my memory when I think of The Cock and the Fox. The first is his description of the cock crowing:—

A yeerd she hadde, enclosed al aboute
With stikkës, and a dryë dych withoute,
In which she hadde a cok, heet Chauntëcleer.
In al the land of crowyng nas his peer.
His voys was murier than the murie orgon
On messë dayes that in the chirchë gon;
Wel sikerer was his crowyng in his logge
Than is a klokke, or an abbey orlogge.
By nature knew he eche ascencioun
Of the equynoxial in thilkë toun;
For whan degreës fiftene weren ascended,
Thanne crew he that it myghte nat been amended.

The second is where Chaucer prefacës his discusion on Free-will and Necessity, thus:—

But what that God forwoot moot nedës bee,
After the opinioun of certein clerkis.

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The third is his idyllic description of pigs running and squalling in the general panic of the farm:—

*They ronnë so hem thoughte hir hertë breek.
They yollëden, as feendës doon in helle;*

Now how do these old favourites appear in Dryden? The first is thus:—

*A yard she had with pales enclosed about,
Some high, some low, and a dry ditch without.
Within this homestead lived, without a peer,
For crowing loud, the noble Chanticleer;
So light her cock, whose singing did surpass
The merry notes of organs at the mass.
More certain was the crowing of the cock
To number hours, than is an abbey-clock;
And sooner than the matin-bell was rung,
He clapp'd his wings upon his roost, and sung.*

All is spoilt; and it is characteristic that crowing is confus'd with singing. The second is omitted. The third reads thus:—

*With many a deadly grunt and doleful squeak,
Poor swine, as if their pretty hearts would break.*

How disastrous to Dryden's common intelligence, not to

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spark of his artistic sense, is the comparison of his version with that of the master whom he thought to improve!

Worn question more. Dryden said that Milton wrote in blank verse because he could not rhyme. 'He had neither the ease of it nor the graces of it; which is manifest in his *Juvenilia*, where his rhyme is always constrained and forced, and comes hardly from him, at an age when the soul is most pliant (sic) and the passion of love makes almost every man a rhymers though not a poet.'

The end of this well-worded paragraph is a quibble, which, if it be not folly, is something worse. If the writer was not himself blinded by jealousy, he wished to deceive his readers.

Excellence in rhyme is a technical quality which implies study or practice; and Milton had mastered it early. I have found scholars thinking they knew all about Lycidas who had never discovered that it contains unrhymed lines; nor will everyone at once perceive what a mastery that means. As for Dryden's rhyme, it is no doubt of a polished up as successfully as the rest of his verse; but the passages which I have chanced to quote show that he was content that it should sometimes override both grammar and sense. And what did he do when his 'soul was most pliant'? I turn to his *Annus Mirabilis*

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tu discover. I find in the first six stanzas of it did go, did sweat, and did bear all us'd for the narrativ preterit tu make rhyme; far, war, and long, strong, rich rhyme together twice in these twenty-four lines; while year rhymes bear, and lost rhymes coast. ¹And ther is an example of the very worst kind of bad rhyming in this epigram which I began by considering where Nature in her effort to make a third, is sed tu hav joined the former toe! Milton 'lacked this ease and grace'! he rhym'd thus:

*Com, and trip it as ye go
On the light fantastick toe.*

I hav not written this in order tu run down a port with whose works I am by choice unfamiliar. Certunly I can say that, if all portry had been like Dryden's, I shud never hav felt eny inclination tuwards it.² Each port has his special quality: Catullus, his concinnity; Shelley, romanticism; Heine, his bitter-sweet. A writer might desire tu imitate the special charm of won of these, but in Dryden wud find nothing desirable.

It was when lately I happen'd tu hav tu look into his volums that these old questions recur'd tu me with som indignation for Milton; and I thavht I wud write them down.

¹ From here tu end of coplit added later by R. B.

² The end of this paragraf added later by R. B.

THIS POSTSCRIPT, ADDED LATER IN MS. BY R. B., WAS NOT PRINTED WITH THE CAUSERIE

Richard Steele (1672-1729) had *alredy* observ'd Dryden's injustice towards Milton. In speaking of this 'additional satisfaction' which the society of the belov'd gives to our pleasures he says,

¹ 'This is admirably described in Milton, who represents Eve, though in Paradise itself, no further pleased with the beautiful objects around her, than as she sees them in company with Adam, in that passage so inexpressibly charming:—

With thee conversing I forget all time,
All seasons and thir change, all please alike.
Sweet is the breath of morn, her rising sweet,
With charm of earliest Birds; pleasant the Sun
When first on this delightful Land he spreads
His orient Beams, on herb, tree, fruit, and flour,
Glistring with dew; fragrant the fertile earth
After soft showers; and sweet the coming on
Of grateful Evening milde, then silent Night
With this her solemn Bird and this fair Moon,

¹ From Mr. Bickerstaff visits a friend.

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*And these the Gemms of Heav'n, her starrie train:
But neither breath of Morn when she ascends
With charm of earliest Birds, nor rising Sun
On this delightful land, nor herb, fruit, floure,
Glistring with dew, nor fragrance after showers,
Nor grateful Evening mild, nor silent Night
With this her solemn Bird, nor walk by Moon,
Or glittering Starr-light without thee is sweet.*

'The variety of images in this passage is infinitely pleasing, and the recapitulation of each particular image, with a little varying of the expression, makes one of the finest turns of words that I have ever seen: which I rather mention, because Mr. Dryden has said, in his preface to Juvenal, that he could meet with no turn of words in Milton.

'It may be further observed, that though the sweetness of these verses has something in it of a pastoral, yet it excels the ordinary kind, as much as the scene of it is above an ordinary field or meadow. I might here, since I am accidentally led into this subject, show several passages in Milton that have as excellent turns of this nature as any of our English poets whatsoever; but shall only mention that which follows, in which

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he describes the fallen angels engaged in the intricate disputes of predestination, free will and foreknowledge; and, to humour the perplexity, makes a kind of labyrinth in the very words that describe it.

*Others apart sat on a Hill retir'd,
In thoughts more elevate, and reason'd high
Of Providence, Foreknowledge, Will, and Fate,
Fixt Fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute,
And found no end, in wandring mazes lost.'*

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